

(Pasāda,kampana) Moggallāna Sutta

The Discourse on Moggallāna (Shaking up the Mansion)

[Using psychic powers to discipline others]

(Saṃyutta Nikāya 51.14/5:269-271)

Translated & annotated by Piya Tan ©2008

Introduction

The (Pasāda,kampana) Moggallāna Sutta (S 51.14) relates how the Buddha instructs Moggallāna to use his psychic power to literally *shake up* some unmindful monks into a sense of spiritual urgency (*samvega*).¹ [§§1-7]

While the story is unique to this Sutta, the rest of the Sutta closely parallels **the (Iddhi) Moggallāna Sutta** (S 51.31).² This section briefly defines the four *iddhi,pāda* and closes with the definition of the various psychic powers [§10], with an elision (*peyyāla*) implying the other four mundane super-knowledges (*abhiññā*), and the knowledge of the destruction of the mental influxes [§11], which makes Moggallāna an arhat.

This discourse should be studied with **the (Pasāda,kampana) Moggallāna Sutta** (S 51.14) and its notes.

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The Discourse on Moggallāna (Shaking-up the Mansion)

(S 51.14/5:269-271)

1 Thus have I heard.

The undisciplined monks

At one time the Blessed One was residing in the mansion of Migāra's mother in Eastern Park [Pubb'ārāma] near Sāvattihī.

2 Now at that time, some monks were dwelling on the ground floor. They were covetous, strongly lusting after sense-pleasures, with a mind of ill will, with a mind of corrupted intentions,³ muddle-headed, without full awareness, lacking concentration, scatter-brained, loose in faculty.

Moggallāna's psychic powers

3 Then the Blessed One addressed the venerable Mahā Moggallāna,

“Moggallāna, these fellow brahmacharis dwelling on the ground floor [270] of the mansion of Migāra's mother are restless, arrogant, vain, sharp-tongued, rambling in talk, muddle-headed, without full awareness, lacking concentration, scatter-brained, loose in faculty.”⁴

¹ On *samvega*, see **Mahā,parinibbāna S** (D 16) = SD 9 Intro (7f).

² S 51.31/5:288 f = SD 27.7.

³ *Paduṭṭha,mana,saṅkappo*.

⁴ *Uddhatā unnalā capalā mukharā vikiṇṇa,vācā abhijjhālu kāmesu tibba,sārāgo, byāpanna,citto paduṭṭha,mana,saṅkappo, muṭṭha-s,sati asampajāno asamāhito vibbhanta,citto pākat'indriyo*. This list also in **Jantu S** (S 2.25/1:61 f), where its Comy explains as follows: “**restless**” (*uddhatā*) means of a restless temperament due to perceiving unallowable as allowable, what is blameworthy as blameless (in accordance with the Vinaya), and converse-

Go, Moggallāna, inspire these monks with a sense of urgency!”

“Yes, bhante,” the elder Mahā Moggallāna replied to the Blessed One.

Then he performed an act of psychic power so that with his big toe, he caused the mansion of Migāra’s mother to shake, quake and tremble.⁵

The monks shaken up

4 Then those monks, shocked and terrified, stood at one side and said,

“It’s astonishing indeed, sirs! It’s amazing indeed, sirs!

There is no wind, and this mansion of Migāra’s mother has a deep foundation, well-founded, unshakable, immovable. Yet, it shook, quaked and trembled!”

5 Then the Blessed One approached the monks and said this to them:

“Bhikshus, why are you standing at one side, shocked and terrified/”

“It’s astonishing indeed, sirs! It’s amazing indeed, sirs!

There is no wind, and this mansion of Migāra’s mother has a deep foundation, well-founded, unshakable, immovable. Yet, it shook, quaked and trembled!”

6 “Bhikshus, the mansion of Migāra’s mother was made to shake, quake and tremble by the monk Moggallāna with his big toe, out of his desire to arouse a sense of urgency in you.

What do you think, bhikshus, by having cultivated, having developed what things has the monk Moggallāna become so powerful, so mighty?”

“Bhante, our teachings are rooted in the Blessed One, guided by the Blessed One, has the Blessed One as refuge. It would be good indeed if the Blessed One were to explain its meaning. Having heard the Blessed One, the monks would remember it.”⁶ [271]

7 “Then, listen, bhikshus, pay close attention to it, I will speak.”

“Yes, bhante!” the monks answered the Blessed One in assent.

The 4 paths of spiritual power

The Blessed One said this:⁷

8a “Here, bhikshus, the monk Moggallāna has cultivated the the path to spiritual power [basis of success] *endowed with concentration gained through desire [will to act] (chanda) and through striving.*

He has cultivated the path to spiritual power [basis of success] *endowed with concentration gained through energy (vīriya) and through striving.*⁸

He has cultivated the path to spiritual power [basis of success] *endowed with concentration gained through the mind (citta) and through striving.*

He has cultivated the path to spiritual power [basis of success] *endowed with concentration gained through mental investigation (vīmaṅsā) and through striving.*

ly; “arrogant” (*unnaḷā*) means puffed up with empty conceit like a fat reed; “vain” (*capalā*) means vain on account of robes, bowl, adornment, etc; “sharp-tongued” (*mukharā*) means rough in speech; “rambling in talk” (*vikīṇṇa-vācā*) means unrestrained in speech, rambling aimlessly all day; “muddle-headed” (*muṭṭha-s, satino*) means bereft of mindfulness, without mindfulness, forgetting what has been done right here; “without full awareness” (*asampajānā*) means lacking in wisdom; “lacking concentration” (*asamāhitā*) means lacking access and full concentration, like a ship caught in strong currents; “scatter-brained” (*vibbhanta, cittā*; Comy *vibbhanta, cittā*) means with wandering minds, like foolish deer caught in the path; “loose in faculty” (*pākat’indriyā*) means with open faculties due to non-restraint like when they were still laymen. (SA 3:257= 1:115)

⁵ Comy says that he entered into the water-kasina meditation, emerged, and determined that the ground on which the mansion stood should become water. Then he rose into the air and struck it with his toe. (SA 3:257)

⁶ *Bhagavam, mūlakā no bhante dhammā, bhagavam nettikā, bhagavam paṭisaraṇā. Sādhu vata bhante bhagavatañ-ñ’eva paṭibhātu etassa bhāsītassa attho. Bhagavato sutvā bhikkhū dhāressantī ti.* This is stock (M 1:309 f, 317, 465, 3:115; S 2:80 f; A 1:199, 4:158, 351, 5:355).

⁷ Here, instead of the abridged passage, I have listed §8a as the summary of the 4 *iddhi, pāda*, followed by the full statement [§§8bcde] to the end as listed in the (Iddhi) Moggallāna S (S 51.31/5:288 f) = SD 27.7.

⁸ *Chanda, samādhi, padhāna, saṅkhāra, samannāgataṃ*: see SD 27.7 Intro.

8b (1) ENTHUSIASM-BASED CONCENTRATION. Here, bhikshus, the monk Moggallāna has cultivated the path to spiritual power [basis of success] *endowed with concentration gained through desire⁹ (chanda) and through striving*, thinking,

‘Thus my desire will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted internally nor distracted externally.’

And he is one who dwells perceiving what is after and what is before, thus:

‘As before, so after; as after, so before. As below, so above; as above, so below. As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’¹⁰

Thus with a mind that is open and uncovered, he cultivates a mind filled with light.

8c (2) ENERGY-BASED CONCENTRATION. He has cultivated the path to spiritual power [basis of success] *endowed with concentration gained through energy (vīriya) and through striving*, thinking,

‘Thus my desire will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted internally nor distracted externally.’

And he is one who dwells perceiving what is after and what is before, thus:

‘As before, so after; as after, so before. As below, so above; as above, so below. As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’

Thus with a mind that is open and uncovered, he cultivates a mind filled with light.

8d (3) MIND-BASED CONCENTRATION. He has cultivated the path to spiritual power [basis of success] *endowed with concentration gained through the mind (citta) and through striving*, thinking,

‘Thus my desire will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted internally nor distracted externally.’

And he is one who dwells perceiving what is after and what is before, thus:

‘As before, so after; as after, so before. As below, so above; as above, so below. As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’

Thus with a mind that is open and uncovered, he cultivates a mind filled with light.

8e (4) INVESTIGATION-BASED CONCENTRATION. He has cultivated the path to spiritual power [basis of success] *endowed with concentration gained through mental investigation (vīmaṃsā) and through striving*, thinking,

‘Thus my desire will be neither too slack nor too tense, and it will neither be constricted internally nor distracted externally.’

And he is one who dwells perceiving what is after and what is before, thus:

‘As before, so after; as after, so before. As below, so above; as above, so below. As by day, so at night; as at night, so by day.’

Thus with a mind that is open and uncovered, he cultivates a mind filled with light.

The various psychic powers

9 Bhikshus, it is by having cultivated, having developed these four paths of spiritual power [the four bases of success] that the monk Moggallāna has become so powerful, so mighty.

⁹ Here, it has a neutral, even positive, sense; alt tr: “will to act; enthusiasm.”

¹⁰ This is stock: *Pacchā, pure, saññī ca viharati – yathā pure tathā pacchā, yathā pacchā tathā pure; yathā adho tathā uddham, yathā uddham tathā adho; yathā divā tathā rattim, yathā rattim tathā divā. Iti vivaṭena cetasā aparīyonaddhena sappabhāsam cittaṃ bhāveti: Pubba S (S 51.11/5:263 ×2), Maha-p-phala S (S 51.12/5:267 f), (Id-dhi, pāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 51.20/5:277 ×2, 278), Magga S (S 51.21/5:281), (Iddhi) Moggallāna S (S 51.31/5:288 ×4), Tathāgata S (S 51.32/5:289 ×2). Simply, “as before, so after,” refers to evenness of practice, while “as above, so below,” refers to meditation on the 31 parts. On the meaning of terms here, see (Iddhi, pāda) Vibhaṅga S (S 51.-20/5:277) = SD 28.14. Cf *Idh’āvuso, bhikkhu āloka, saññam manasi karoti, divā, saññam adhiṭṭhāti yathā divā tathā rattim, yathā rattim tathā divā. Iti vivaṭena cetasā aparīyonaddhena sappabhāsam cittaṃ bhāveti: Saṅgīti S (D 33.-1.11(5)/3:223, where it is one of the four cultivations of concentration (samādhi bhāvanā); Samādhi Bhāvanā S (A 4.44/2:44) = SD 24.1, for context of the meditation; (Anussati-ṭ, ṭhāna) Udāyi S (A 6.29/3:322 = SD 24.8. Cf Pm 1:114.**

10 Indeed, bhikshus, it is by having cultivated, having developed these four paths of spiritual power [the four bases of success] that the monk Moggallāna has the various psychic powers, that is to say,¹¹

- (1) Having been one he becomes many; having been many he becomes one.
 - (2) He appears, and vanishes.
 - (3) He goes unhindered through walls, through ramparts, and through mountains as if through space.
 - (4) He dives in and out of the earth as if it were water.
 - (5) He walks on water without sinking as if it were earth.
 - (6) Sitting cross-legged, he flies through the air like a winged bird.
 - (7) With his hand he touches and strokes even the sun and the moon, so mighty, so powerful.
 - (8) He has power over his body up to as far as the Brahmā world. [289]
- [...etc...]¹²

The destruction of the mental influxes

11 Indeed, bhikshus, it is by having cultivated, having developed these four paths of spiritual power [the four bases of success] that the monk Moggallāna enters and dwells in the destruction of the influxes,¹³ having realized for himself through direct knowledge, upon attaining the liberation of mind and the liberation by wisdom¹⁴ that are influx-free with the destruction of the mental influxes!”

— evaṃ —

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¹¹ *Eko'pi hutvā bahudhā hoti, bahudhā'pi hutvā eko hoti; āvibhāvaṃ tiro,bhāvaṃ tiro,kuṭṭaṃ tiro,pākāraṃ tiro,pabbataṃ asajjamāno gacchati seyyathā'pi ākāse. Pathaviyāpi ummuji'animujjāṃ karoti seyyathā'pi udake. Udake'pi abhijjāmaṇe gacchati [Ce Ke abhijjāmaṇo] seyyathā'pi pathaviyā. Ākāse'pi pallānkena kamati seyyathā'pi pakkhī sakuṇo. Ime'pi candima,sūriye evaṃ mah'iddhike evaṃ'mahā'nubhāve pāṇinā parāmasati parimajjati. Yāva brahma,lokāpi kāyena vasam vatteti.* i Vism 12.69 takes *āvibhāvaṃ tiro,bhāvaṃ* to be a distinct power, giving a list of 8 powers. The syntax of the Nikāya, Gethin notes, might be read as suggesting only 7 distinct powers. (*The Buddhist Path to Awakening*, 2001: 82 n6)

¹² This elision (*peyyāla*) refers to the other 4 mundane superknowledges (*abhiññā*), viz (2) clairaudience (divine ear) (*dibba,sota*), (3) mind-reading (*ceto,pariyā,ñāṇa*), (4) the knowledge of the recollection past lives (*pubbe,nivās-ānussati,ñāṇa*), (5) the knowledge of death and rebirth (*cut'upapāta,ñāṇa*) or “divine eye” (*dibba,cakkhu*): see **Miracles** = SD 27.5a(9). This is confirmed by Comy to (Iddhi) Moggallāna S (S 51.31 = SD 27.7), which says that in this Sutta and the one foll it in the Iddhi,pāda Sāmyutta, “the six superknowledges are discussed” (SA 3:261).

¹³ “**Mental influxes**,” *āsava*. The term *āsava* (lit “inflow, outflow”) comes from *ā-savati* “flows towards” (ie either “into” or “out” towards the observer). It has been variously translated as influxes, taints (“deadly taints,” RD), corruptions, intoxicants, biases, depravity, misery, evil (influence), or simply left untranslated. The Abhidhamma lists 4 *āsava*: the influx of (1) sense-desire (*kāma'āsava*), (2) (desire for eternal) existence (*bhav'āsava*), (3) wrong views (*diṭṭh'āsava*), (4) ignorance (*avijjāsava*) (D 16.2.4, Pm 1.442, 561, Dhs §§1096-1100, Vbh §937). These 4 are also known as “floods” (*ogha*) and “yokes” (*yoga*). The list of 3 influxes (omitting the influx of views) [43] is probably older and is found more frequently in the Suttas (D 3:216, 33.1.10(20); M 1:55, 3:41; A 3.59, 67, 6.63). The destruction of these *āsavas* is equivalent to arhathood. See BDict: *āsava*.

¹⁴ “Liberation of mind and liberation by wisdom,” respectively, *ceto,vimutti* (or, liberation by concentration, ie through destruction of the mental hindrances) and *paññā,vimutti* (liberation through insight) (A 1:60). One who is “liberated by wisdom” “may not have reached the 8 liberations (*vimokkha*) in his own body, but through seeing with wisdom, his mental influxes are destroyed” (M 70.16/1:478). All arhats are perfectly liberated in the same way from ignorance and suffering, but are distinguished into 2 types on the basis of their proficiency in concentration. Those who can attain the 8 liberations (*aṭṭha,vimokkha*), which include the 4 formless attainments and the attainment of cessation, are called “liberated both ways,” ie, liberated from the physical body by means of the formless dhyanas, and from all defilements by the path of arhathood. Arhats like Sāriputta and Moggallāna are “liberated both ways” (*ubhato,bhāga,vimutta*). The differences between the two types of liberation are given in **Mahā,nidāna S** (D 2:70 f) and **Kiṭṭāgiri S** (M 1:477 f). For full list of the 8 deliverances, see **Mahā Nidāna S** (D 15.35/ 2:70 f) = SD 5.17.35. See also D 3:262, 228; **Vimokkha S**, A 8.66/4:306; also M 120.37/3:103 = SD 3.4.37.